

the **Austrian**

A PUBLICATION OF THE MISES INSTITUTE

Vol. 8, No. 1

January – February 2022



MISESINSTITUTE

A large graphic consisting of three thick arrows. A white arrow points straight up from the bottom center. A blue arrow points left from the middle left. A red arrow points right from the middle right. All three arrows have a curved, rounded base at the bottom.

Sound Economics in a Confused World

Saifedean Ammous
Interviews Jeff Deist

**The Critical
Need for
Independent
Media**

**with
Glenn
Greenwald**



the Austrian

A PUBLICATION OF THE MISES INSTITUTE

- 3 Jeff Deist – From the Publisher
- 4 Sound Economics in a Confused World – Saifedean Ammous
Interviews Jeff Deist
- 18 Knowledge in the Service of a Political Agenda Is Biased – David Gordon Reviews *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* by David Graeber and David Wengrow
- 22 The Critical Need for Independent Media with Glenn Greenwald
- 32 Upcoming Events
- 33 Jeff Deist on TV and Radio
- 33 *Liberty vs. Power* Podcast
- 34 The Ron Paul Revolution: A Ten-Year Retrospective
- 35 Newest Senior Fellows
- 36 Annual Membership Levels and Benefits

Published 2022 (six times per year) by the Mises Institute under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License.
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Publisher: Jeff Deist

Managing Editor: Judith F. Thommesen

Design/Layout: Jonathon Stone

Contributing Editors:

Tho Bishop

David Gordon

Ryan McMaken

MISES INSTITUTE

518 West Magnolia Avenue

Auburn, AL 36832-4501

334.321.2100 | Fax: 334.321.2119

contact@mises.org | mises.org

The Mises Institute is a nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

Note: the views expressed in *The Austrian* are not necessarily those of the Mises Institute.

jeffdeist@mises.org  @jeffdeist

From the Publisher

Jeff Deist

Little progress can be made by merely attempting to repress what is evil. Our great hope lies in developing what is good.

— Calvin Coolidge

Happiest of new years to you!

We enter 2022 as we must, with hope and cheer. Pessimism is a sin, an indulgent luxury for all of us in the West, who have it so good compared to most—and compared to those who came before us. Politics may be hopeless, but broad spheres of action and influence remain open. The key is not to focus on the present rottenness, but to be worthy of the past by contributing even a tiny bit to a better future. That’s why we’re so thrilled to have you engaged with the Mises Institute, as a well-armed combatant in the war of ideas.

Speaking of hope, it’s important to recognize and celebrate the effective rebels in our midst. Consider Saifedean Ammous, a rising star in Austrian economics circles and a ferocious critic of central bankers and their client politicians. You will enjoy my conversation with him, and find optimism in our clear-eyed view of economics as it stands today.

Saifedean is famous in bitcoin circles, but also exceedingly well versed in monetary theory, the history of the gold standard, business cycles, and Austrian method. His books are full of references to Mises, Rothbard, and Hoppe, and no less than Dr. Joe Salerno praises his work as among the most “enlightened and enlightening” Joe has ever read. Dr. Ammous has brought hundreds of thousands, probably millions, of young people to Austrian economics. And he has done so with his own books and his own platforms, rather than an academic or think tank sinecure.

Saifedean Ammous’s new book *The Fiat Standard* is an evisceration of political money, which is to say fiat money created at whim by governments and central banks. The distinction between market money and political money remains as stark today as ever, made clear by the status of the US dollar as an instrument of power. Where does the dollar get its value? How does it maintain value when Congress and the Fed spend and create trillions in response to covid? Is the price inflation millions of American now experience—even official annual CPI numbers are above 6 percent—really transitory? Why do individuals and institutions continue to invest in US Treasuries


paying minimal interest? Will the Fed ever return to “normal” monetary policy, or does it now simply exist to prop up asset prices forever?

The answers to these questions ultimately are economic, not political. Economies cannot be commanded and legislated; goods and services will not simply materialize because the West is magically rich.

Building on themes in Guido Hülsmann’s magnificent book *The Ethics of Money Production*, Ammous shows how political money warps and diminishes every institution with its corrosive effects. Science becomes wholly politicized, as government grants narrow the range of inquiry and experimentation. Taxpayer-funded universities, tenured academics, and student loan programs combine to ruin education and send young people out into the world unable to think. Energy subsidies move production away from reliable fossil fuels toward uneconomic and unreliable “green” sources—which often end up polluting more. Farming becomes corporatized, leading to everything from depleted soil and cheap carbohydrates to misinformation campaigns about meat consumption. Even our personal lives suffer, as we are encouraged to spend and consume rather than save money thanks to low interest rates—which over time thwarts the civilizational effects of capital accumulation.

This moral dimension to monetary policy goes unremarked, yet it’s one of the biggest stories of our time. We desperately need voices like Ammous to make the case that money is far too important to be produced by political fiat.

Also in this issue is a compelling transcript of Glenn Greenwald’s talk on the critical importance of independent media, delivered at our Texas conference this past December. Greenwald is a liberal in the old sense of the word, concerned with civil liberties, free speech, and the growing threat of state police agencies being used against political dissidents. Like Dr. Ammous, Greenwald has managed to free himself from any corporate benefactors by writing exclusively on independent platforms. He is also crowdfunded by his readers, who pay small monthly amounts to sustain his work. Glenn’s talk explains how he bypassed the media gatekeepers, and you will appreciate his honesty and integrity even when you disagree with him.

As always, David Gordon has an unstinting review of a new book, namely Graeber and Wengrow’s overambitious *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (spoiler: the brilliant authors don’t understand economics). And you’ll enjoy learning about everything happening at the Mises Institute in 2022! Hope to see you this year. 

Jeff Deist is president of the Mises Institute.

Sound Economics in a Confused World

Saifedean Ammous
Interviews Jeff Deist

saifedean.com  @saifedean



Saifedean Ammous hosts the podcast *The Bitcoin Standard* where he discusses bitcoin and economics from the Austrian school perspective. He is assistant professor of economics at the Lebanese American University and is the author of several books, including *The Bitcoin Standard*, *The Age of Cryptocurrency*, and *The Fiat Standard*.

Saifedean Ammous: We have lots to talk about. First, I'll begin by saying the Mises Institute is a place to which I owe an enormous debt of gratitude. I was one of the people who stumbled upon this blog, this seemingly innocent blog, in 2007–08 and then just kept digging into the massive, astonishingly large archive of books and articles that are available there and have not stopped digging since then. That has been absolutely life changing.

I was a PhD student at Columbia University learning regular, mainstream economics, none of which made any sense, and then I start hearing about Ron Paul, making all these crazy speeches that make a lot of sense in a world of politics, where politicians are not supposed to make sense. And so, I start digging into this guy and coming across this incredible website where all these economists make sense. Why would an economist make sense? Economists are supposed to write arcane, esoteric math and pretend they're engaged in some centuries-long struggle to understand the mathematical foundations of

how reality works. But the Mises Institute gave me the idea that economics can make sense, economics can actually be something that is helpful to understanding the world. The point of economics, and this is really the culture shock you get from reading mises.org, is that when you're studying mainstream economics, the point of learning economics is in trying to understand what these economists are saying, and then when you understand what they're saying, you don't learn anything useful for the real world. You just learn what those people are saying and then you pass your test and get your degree and get a job. But with the Mises Institute economists, and the economists of the Austrian school, you use the work of the economists in order to understand the world. So, thank you very much for everything that you do with the Mises Institute. Could you tell us a little bit more about the Institute, its history and your role and the milestones in this development over the years?

Jeff Deist: Over the last year in particular, economists and other social scientists have done a very poor job of helping us understand the world, in particular the unseen. The fallout from covid policies is going to be the real story over the next five or ten or twenty years, the alcoholism, the depression, the weight gain, the drug and alcohol abuse. It's going to be incredible. Social scientists are supposed to help us understand the human world, just as natural or physical scientists are supposed to help us understand that world. Most economists are failing us. They're stuck in mathematical modeling and statistics, in data. They don't consider a proper praxeological approach.

But today the Austrian school has a lot of new applications. It has a lot of new proponents and adherents. I think people understand that economics as a profession doesn't work. It doesn't really help society. It doesn't help us understand the world. It doesn't make us happier or healthier or wealthier. It just does dumb things like failing to predict the housing crash of 2007, for example, and it gives us central banking and minimum wage and nonsensical narratives about inequality. It provides an intellectual veneer and cover for the political class. This gives the Left ammunition to claim economics is merely a pseudoscience. It just provides intellectual support for capital, for the wealthy. It isn't a real science. And I understand that critique. I think economists have to bear some responsibility for that.

I hope the Mises Institute provides a counter to all that. We are a free school for anybody who wants to avail themselves of it—maybe a little, maybe a lot. Some people only want to consume the occasional tweet or the odd article to improve their understanding. Some people want to really delve in and read nine-hundred-page books and make Austrian economics part of their life. We want

to be a full-service organization for both kinds of people. Saif, you know we live in a high-time preference society that's been created by the political and banking classes. It's very easy to look at the landscape and say, "Jeff, this is not the time for nine-hundred-page books written by guys from the 1800s. It's time for activism." I understand that. But the flipside is: What matters, what lasts, what is timeless, what is true across time and space?

So yes, fewer and fewer people are willing or capable of sitting down and reading those nine-hundred-page books. Will those people matter more or less in the future? I think they will matter more. Because the Mises Institute is not here so we can plant a flag on top of a pile of rubble, some kind of Mad Max scenario years from now, and say, "See? We were right!" That's not the point or the goal. The goal is to help people learn and reach what Albert Jay Nock called the Remnant—people who are interested in building a world, a civilization, a society that's real. One with a foundation. That means capital accumulation. There is no other way. And increasingly, in my opinion, we should talk about separation. About finding the Remnant. If you spend time on social media, you know people have gotten a lot crazier. Maybe they were always crazy and now we just know about it because they can spout off on social media all day. I don't know which is the case, but it's clear a significant number of people in the West believe enormously illiberal crazy things.

SA: Yes.

JD: And since we have limited time and resources, since scarcity is a fact, how do we spend our time and energy?



Do we try to reach everyone? Do we try to win national elections? Do we wonder why “classical liberalism” seems helpless against progressivism? Or do we try to identify and begin to separate ourselves? That can take place in a variety of ways. That doesn’t necessarily mean geographic secession or even geographic concentration of like-minded people. But it does mean separating in a business sense, in a capital sense, in a political sense, in an economic sense. We have to understand we’re trying to build a world, or improve the world, for people who can be reached. That’s not everyone. I think when we jettison the idea of political universalism, political globalism, it’s really very liberating.

I hope the Mises Institute helps people. I know it does on an individual level. It’s much harder to affect things on a societal level. It’s a very anti-intellectual age in which we find ourselves. But we want to be the biggest and best online school that’s free, that’s digital, that’s available instantaneously for anybody. And increasingly we want mises.org to be a gigantic free library. We’re buying up rights to all kinds of books for which we don’t own the copyright and we’re trying to improve our library function. So, a free school is my idea of what the Mises Institute is.

SA: Yes, it’s very much succeeded in that. One of the most common initial criticisms people have about libertarians is that they come at it from the perspective of the political system and then they find out that there’s a libertarian political party that is massively hopeless. Then they think that libertarianism’s clearly hopeless. I think that is completely missing the point because in my mind, a libertarian political party is going to have to be hopeless because it’s like an atheist branch of Catholicism. It’s just not going to make headway in the Vatican if you start off from the premise that there shouldn’t be a Vatican. And this is the contradiction that a lot of the DC libertarians fall into, and this is why in many cases you see their role is to be basically the bastard. They’re there to justify and give excuses to the regime and convince themselves that they are being pragmatic in order to get concessions from the regime. But in reality, they are actually helping the regime further its ends and its goals by convincing young people who have radical ideas about freedom that this is completely unrealistic and you need to get in with the system. You need to fight at the tiny, little margins to get some of these tiny, increasingly inconsequential ideas that people like the Cato Institute fight for.

For instance, my favorite problem with the Cato Institute is their monetary issues. They’re practically indistinguishable now from run-of-the-mill Keynesians and monetarists. They are pretty much monetarists and they view Austrians as too radical, people like Ludwig von Mises and Murray Rothbard as being too radical. That’s

The whole point of having a Fed is not to have a free market in money, and if you’re trying to push free market ideas within the Fed, you’re not going to get anywhere.

why when something like bitcoin comes along, they’re naturally hostile to it. They’ve been enormously hostile because they are conditioned to think of the problem as having to be solved by government and if only we just had the government to put the right people in. If only they would take Cato’s monetary advisors and put them on the Fed, then we’d have a libertarian free market monetary policy, which is an absurd contradiction in terms that’s never going to get anywhere. The whole point of having a Fed is not to have a free market in money, and if you’re trying to push free market ideas within the Fed, you’re not going to get anywhere. All that you do, again, is serve to move people away from promising ideas of change like bitcoin to allying with the regime. This is why there’s a lot of parallels and a lot of confluence between people at the Mises Institute and bitcoiners, that it’s the same approach.

As you said, the best way to have clean water is to separate the clean water pipes from the sewage. You need to make a separate place where we can have these ideas, we can think about them. It’s not about achieving results immediately, it’s about achieving the correct results, no matter how long it takes. There’s always time for nine-hundred-page books and there’s always time to think about these things in the long term. People who are not reading nine-hundred-page books are still reading nine hundred pages of nine hundred different articles in the *New York Times* repeating the same stupid talking points over and over and over again. So, you could skip these articles and read the nine-hundred-page book and come out with a much better perspective. It’s a multipreference approach.

Coincidentally, within the Mises crowd, there has been some skepticism of bitcoin, but overall, it’s incomparable to the reaction that you get from the DC libertarian think tanks. It’s striking just how reasonable people at the

Mises Institute have been. I've spoken to Hans Hoppe about it, I've spoken to Joe Salerno about it, I've spoken to you. I haven't spoken to David Gordon, but I know Mike Goldstein spoke to him. Most of these people had problems with bitcoin initially. All of us had problems with bitcoin initially. Everybody thinks about it, but then the notion that we're going to have a money that is separate from the state is something that makes sense. They're not hostile to it. They might not necessarily get all the technical aspects of it. They might not be enthusiastic about it, but they're definitely not hostile to the idea that we're going to separate money from the state and we're going to have a software program that everybody can audit replace money. And once you go over a few of the technical problems that people have with it, then the reaction is "Yeah, we'll let the market decide." Ron Paul, of course, is like that as well. It's a very different reaction that you get from the regime libertarians, who are coming up with an endless parade of problems that they can't even defend and state eloquently. They know that it can't work and it won't work, and it ultimately comes down to "Well, that's not politically realistic. We need to aim for something that is politically realistic."

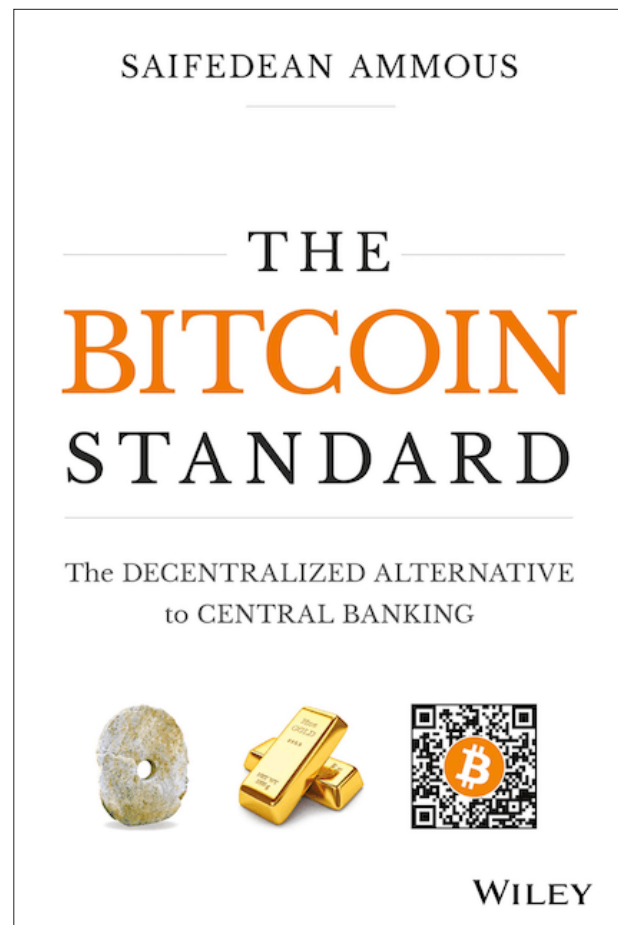
JD: When you hear someone talking about public policy, so-called, you need to run away from that person. We don't need public policy. That sounds like a program for cattle. We especially don't need monetary "policy." When think tanks talk about this and that monetary policy, how we need some sort of rules-based Fed or some sort of NGDP (nominal gross domestic product) targeting, they are way off base. The minute there's a crisis or an exigent circumstance, central bankers throw the rules out the window. They don't follow rules. They're operating in an ad hoc manner to save their own skins. So much for public policy or monetary policy. Look, the chair of the banking committee ("Financial Services" Committee) in Congress is Maxine Waters. She is a crazy person. The idea that a DC think tank is going to send somebody over to testify before her committee about NGDP targeting is just laughable. She's just going to say, "Well we need cheaper loans for low-income people." This is why politics and economics should never mix.

I mentioned nine-hundred-page books, but Mises also wrote *Nation, State, and Economy* and *Liberalism* in the interwar years. These were more political tracts about liberalism per se. And people should read these because they are only three hundred pages! For Mises, liberalism meant the wholesale separation of economy and state. Sometimes we lose sight of that. Liberalism, today libertarianism, should not be mistaken for feel-good liberation theology or a rejection of social structures. It's about the rule of law and property. That's Mises's liberalism. It was about a rigid separation of property

and state, of economics and state. One paragraph in *Liberalism* which makes a lot of libertarians squirm distills the entire liberal program—of course, Mises uses "liberal" in the nineteenth-century sense—down to a single word: property. It's not about living your best life without authority or self-actualization, or accepting a host of left-cultural precepts. All of that is an appendage, with which I don't particularly agree. I would say people don't have to agree with this appendage.

SA: It's tangential at best.

JD: It's tangential, but more importantly, high-time preference societies tend to devolve very quickly. We want less external governance, but also no internal governance—which strikes me as a crazy proposition. In other words, we ought to support all the intermediary institutions that stand between the individual and the state.



That's a bit of a detour from your question, but I do think when bitcoin came along, it posed a serious challenge to Austrians and libertarians. My own thinking on it has evolved a lot, albeit gradually, starting with Bob Murphy and then Caitlin Long and then your book. Certainly we support the idea of denationalization of money. We love the idea of competing currencies, but is bitcoin just a particular brand among many? If so, we shouldn't advocate one brand over another, like Toyota over Honda. That was my facile thinking before reading your book *The Bitcoin Standard*. I've changed my thoughts since then. In Austrian economics circles there has been resistance to bitcoin, certainly. Gold was the ideal alternative to government fiat for so many decades. And to be fair to gold bugs, bitcoin was promoted and sold as a high-tech solution to problems with fiat rather than as a commodity. But algorithms aren't high-tech per se. They can be very, very complex, but the computing power to solve them isn't complicated. The image of bitcoin was futuristic money for perpetual travelers who live on islands off Singapore somewhere. I think it should have been sold as a digital commodity. It should have been promoted as a savings vehicle for people worried about inflation. So I don't want the Mises Institute to be a bitcoin promoter. I don't



view that as our role. But I don't want us to be a bitcoin antagonist either. So that's my weaselly answer, Saif.

SA: No, I agree with you. I don't think it's a weaselly answer because you do quite a bit of work to educate about bitcoin. But yes, I think you're absolutely correct in that this is the Mises Institute, it's not a bitcoin institute. We have the Satoshi Nakamoto Institute, which focuses on promoting the works of Satoshi and on bitcoin, but the Mises Institute is the work of Mises and it has a wider rim, and as powerful as bitcoin is, I think it would be distracting from the overall mission. I know a lot of bitcoiners give me and give you trouble for that, but I don't particularly see a problem with it. I think your approach has been quite reasonable about it and you're absolutely correct. For many years I heard about bitcoin and I just dismissed it because I did not think that it had the properties that would make it really replace gold, get us rid of gold. Initially, again, it was promoted as just a faster, cheaper PayPal, that was the main idea. I would say around 2014, '15, '16 it becomes clear that this is a pretty powerful monster that is not out there competing with PayPal. This is monetary policy that is set in stone. Nobody can change this, nobody can edit it, and once you start thinking of it this way, then yes, it begins to make sense and that this is going to be a very big deal. That's the conclusion that you arrive at from this.

Back to the Mises Institute. Tell me more about the history of the Institute. How was it started and what was its initial mission? I know Murray Rothbard played a role in that and Lew Rockwell. Can you tell us a bit more about this?

JD: Well, the Cato Institute was going to be home to Rothbard, and Rothbard intended to create a real viable Austrian outpost there. People don't know this. The Cato Institute started in San Francisco. Murray Rothbard was out there before it moved to Washington. The idea was to Austrianize free market economics, which was mired in Milton Friedman and monetarism. It was mired in supply-side thinking in the early Reagan years. That was the goal, but Rothbard had a falling-out with the Cato Institute. He felt they were moving away from hard-core or pure Austrian economics. As a result of that, Lew Rockwell got involved and connected with Mises's widow, Margit. Lew had met Margit and Ludwig von Mises during his days at Arlington House Publishing. Lew and Murray knew Auburn University had a friendly trustee on the board. Auburn also had some friendly professors in the economics department in the early 1980s. So Lew came down to Alabama, and in hindsight that was a stroke of luck. DC think tanks are so bad, and so corrupted, and we need to turn our backs on the whole thing. We need to turn our backs on Washington, and Brussels, and the UN and the IMF (International Monetary Fund), and all of these

The image of bitcoin was futuristic money for perpetual travelers who live on islands off Singapore somewhere. I think it should have been sold as a digital commodity. It should have been promoted as a savings vehicle for people worried about inflation.

organizations. So in hindsight, we benefitted enormously from being located outside the Beltway.

Initially, we were involved with the Auburn University economics department. I'd like to point out we actually paid rent to Auburn University. And then Lew started raising some money on his own and we were able to build a building across the street. We've expanded that building a couple times since. Over the years we've tried to be a place where Austrian economics could be explored in full. Contrary to some of our critics, we are not simply about Mises and Rothbard and Hoppe. You can go through our archives and find vast volumes of work by Carl Menger and Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk and Friedrich von Wieser and lots of other economists in the tradition.

We certainly claim the Misesian strand of pure praxeology, which Rothbard improved upon, and we don't shy away from the implications of that. Plus Mises and Rothbard wrote about everything. Mises was intimately involved in the Viennese chamber of commerce. We've never shied away from considering the full implications of pure praxeology, of pure theory.

We've never shied away from considering the implications, as Mises did in *Liberalism and Nation, State, and Economy*, of secession and breakaway movements and radical decentralization. We've never been afraid of the secession word. We've never been afraid of openly discussing and considering the ramifications of pure anarcho-capitalism, of statelessness—of how defense, police, and courts could be provided on the marketplace. Do we really need minimal government? We've never been afraid to discuss whether democracy is a good thing or whether it's a bad thing. Is it really the only way to organize society? Is social democracy the final and fullest expression of political organization in the twenty-first-century West? Is it the enlightened end point of liberalism? Well, no, clearly not. Democracy in the West produced several disasters in the twentieth century. So I'd like to think we've been uncompromising. I'd like to think we've carried on the

intransigence, or better yet the courage, of Mises and Rothbard.

SA: I think, obviously, the critics will take any deviation from government propaganda as a sign of “You're inflexible and you're dogmatic,” and, of course, that's all projection. If you don't agree with the Overton window of DC accepted debate, then you're considered a dogmatic fanatic. But in reality, the intellectual width of debate within the Mises Institute itself is far wider than the entire politically correct space of everyone in DC. That's astonishing. Within the Mises Institute, as you said, secession and democracy, these are topics that are discussed, and there are people that are in favor of them and there are people that are opposed to them. And they get together in the meetings and they discuss them, and it's usually pretty cordial and respectful and intellectual. This is much more than can be said about the broader debate in the general public arena, where there's a clear idea of what is considered acceptable and it's a very narrow range between the Republicans and the Democrats.

Immigration is another issue. Within the Mises Institute, there's a lot of debate on that topic. The topic of immigration makes some people uncomfortable, but the Institute is a place where you get to hear the different perspectives on this issue and how it should be tackled. And the role of the police and the role of the military and the role of the government in terms of national defense. There's a huge variety of perspectives within the Mises Institute, which you don't find within general debate. In my mind, it's just like with economics: the government perspective, the government propaganda perspective, is absolutely limiting and suffocating.

And as you were saying earlier, you're not sure if people have gotten crazier or the internet has made us realize that people are crazier. People have definitely gotten crazier, particularly in the last twenty months or so, since the whole coronavirus situation started. The world has truly, truly gone mad. Even the most fanatic, hysterical people

What's the unseen? The unseen is the opportunity cost, the tradeoffs, all the harms which will wash over our society and our economy over the next ten or twenty or thirty years as a result of these lockdowns.

today, who are still calling for shutdowns and lockdowns, even those people, if you spoke to them in 2019 and you asked them, “Your political opponent wants to do this. What do you think about it?” They would have said, “This is crazy.” And yet a year later they were calling for just that from all across the political spectrum. It’s deeply illiberal in a way that was unimaginable in the vast majority of the world, not just in Western liberal democracy.

It’s all over the world, in Latin American countries, in Asian countries, the idea that your movement from your home needs the permission of your local health czar, and your ability to open your business, and how many people can you accommodate in that business, and what hours you operate. All of that has become the purview of somebody who is unelected and whose only credential is the fact that they have been brought up by the global public health mafia.

All the public health people before 2020, they discussed the possibilities of different pandemics and even in the cases where things were far deadlier than this, this was never a strategy. A total lockdown of the population was never considered a viable strategy. They knew it would be ineffective, and it is ineffective, and it has proven ineffective. They knew that it would be massively destructive in a way that would cause far more harm than whatever the disease can do, and this is exactly what we’re seeing.

It’s to your great credit that from day one, the Mises Institute was very clear on this. You are not taking Bill Gates’s money and not taking the World Health Organization’s money. Everywhere else is being funded by these criminal organizations, and then suddenly, they were getting their marching orders in sync. One day you wake up and everybody wants you to stay home, and then the next day everybody wants you to wear a diaper on your face, and then the next day everybody wants you to not take medicines which are proven to be effective because the science says that we shouldn’t take them and they’re not effective. Everybody’s singing to the same

tune. And yet the Mises Institute from day one said, “No, the shutdowns are insane. People can make their own decisions.”

It’s amazing, this basis in the liberal tradition, the old liberal tradition, nineteenth-century liberalism. It’s like a vaccination against brain damage from the media. It doesn’t matter how insane the propaganda gets, it doesn’t matter how many videos of people falling over in China you see on TV. You’ve taken your Mises shots. You’ve read the nine-hundred-page books and it’s not going to fly. And bitcoiners, I should say, bitcoiners from early on were some of the very few people who were calling this out. I personally got abuse from a lot of idiots and I’m very happy about it now because I’ve managed to eliminate an enormous number of deadweight and idiots from my life because of this. But back in March 2020, it was extremely rare for anybody to say, “Nope, I don’t think you should force people to stay home.”

JD: Looking back on March 2020, it reminds me of the period right after 9/11 in America. There was this sinking feeling in our stomachs, but it wasn’t about the virus—it was about what our government might do in response to the virus. And so that was very similar to 9/11. Looking back, I think covid may be worse than the Bush-Cheney-Ashcroft “global war on terror.” Government responses to covid were nearly universal across the globe, so that was unprecedented. We didn’t have that with the Spanish flu, we didn’t have it with two world wars—people in London still went to work during the Blitz! Everything is global now, led by the West. We really should view it as neocolonialism, where the West makes decisions and the rest of the world follows suit. This is not a healthy situation. It is political imperialism. We have some two hundred countries on this planet. They all should exercise internal sovereign decision-making, as far as I’m concerned. I’d like to see a thousand countries or ten thousand countries. Then maybe we would have some alternative approaches to covid.

Covid has been a very scary time. I'm as cynical as anybody with respect to politics and the managerial state, which neither Trump nor Biden managed to control. But the managers have kept the narrative going this long: two weeks to flatten the curve, vaccinations will make life normal again, get your third booster. But in March 2020, everyone thought it would all be over by the end of summer. Surely, we'll be back to normal by fall. But that didn't happen. It's breathtaking, it's pretty scary.

This world had enough problems with money and entitlements and war prior to covid policies. What's so remarkable is that economists and social scientists *should have been* sounding the alarm. Just because someone's a public health expert, so-called, just because someone's a doctor, that does not mean they're equipped to make cost-benefit decisions for society as a whole. That's crazy. We don't just allow scientists to run our lives. You know, during the Blitz in London people went to work. During the Spanish flu people went to work, so the idea that we drop everything like children and abdicate our personal decision-making to these medical doctors is unprecedented. Doctors don't get to decide whether we have restaurants open, or whether we can get on an airplane, or whether our kids stay home from school. Economists were supposed to be out there helping us see the unseen.

What's the unseen? The unseen is the opportunity cost, the tradeoffs, all the harms which will wash over our society and our economy over the next ten or twenty or thirty years as a result of these lockdowns. Teenagers lost a year and a half ... so far. Developing infants see these masked faces. What is that going to mean for early childhood development? How many people gained twenty or thirty pounds, and how do you measure that across an economy, across time, in terms of diabetes, early death, and all the things that come with obesity, all of these unseen things which are very hard to measure? Fauci insinuated there might be millions of deaths—which was not true—but even if it had been true, we still needed to consider tradeoffs. This is where economists failed us.

Economists should have been asserting themselves two years ago, saying, "Hold on, we need to talk about the unseen."

SA: We've had one economist from the London School of Economics on our podcast *The Bitcoin Standard*, Paul Frijters. He's an empirical economist and very not Austrian, all about numbers. He was shocked that he was an exception. I went to the LSE, to Columbia University, and I studied a lot of empirical economics with a lot of empirical economists, and I know that these people will try and calculate and measure the most obscure and arcane little details and consequences of things. For example, they get hundreds of thousands of dollars to study what is the impact of giving one African village a little bit of extra food for one-year-olds? And then they'll follow these one-year-olds ten, twenty years down the line and quantify the impact on their income and on their IQ and on their height and on their everything.

There's an enormous industry of empirical economists out there measuring the impact of all kinds of things. You and I have our problems with that because, ultimately, without theory, this doesn't tell you anything, and of course, this can be utilized and abused in all kinds of different ways. I still expected that you'd get these stat nerds to speak up and say, "Well, you know, if we're going to shut down the world for two weeks," which is what it was initially, "this is the impact. This is how many people are going to die from unemployment and how many people are going to die from poverty. This is how many cancer diagnoses are going to be missed, this is how many malaria cases are going to die, this is how many tuberculosis patients are going to be dying because they won't be getting their treatment, AIDS patients, etc., etc." And yet all of these empirical economists, regime bootlickers, they were just trotting out the same propaganda that was being put out by the World Health Organization and all the other organizations. It's just "Oh, well, yeah, we need to do this because otherwise millions of people would die, according to the model." And suddenly, these models, these completely nonsensical models of millions of people



[C]onceptualizing the unseen without any numbers is far more powerful and far more useful than all of the sophisticated mathematics that you could deploy when you are funded to ignore the unseen.

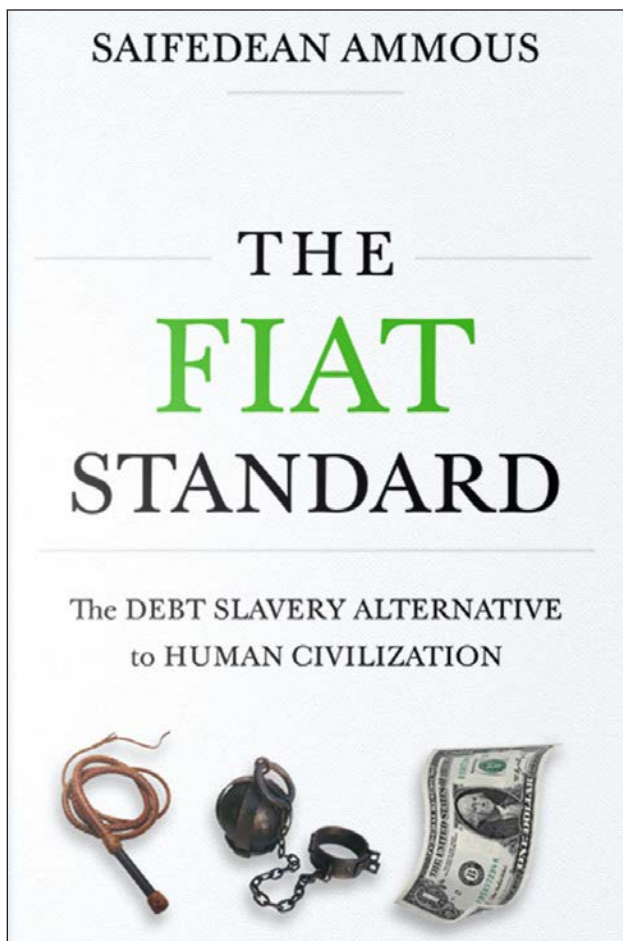
dying, were just counted as if they were reality. Then the empirical economists went to measuring how many lives we saved based on comparing it to the model. And, of course, ignoring the glaring cases of Sweden and Belarus, which never implemented lockdowns and didn't see any of this mass devastation and death that everybody else was mentioning.

As I said earlier, it's a great credit to the Mises Institute and to Austrian economists for being some of the very few economists to speak out against this, without needing to do sophisticated math. I think it's a damning indictment of this sophisticated math because, even for all of my appreciation of what Paul Frijters has done, this clearly shows that numbers without theory, numbers without a guiding framework, numbers without a praxeological basis, are just basically prostitutes that can say whatever you want. You just focus your analysis on one part of the story and you can make those lockdowns look great, or you focus your analysis on something else and you can make the lockdowns look bad. And that's why these empirical economists are so easy to manipulate, why they

talk nonsense, because you just fund the questions that you want. You fund them to look into the numbers that you want to look at. You make assumptions about how much staying at home has saved lives and then they can go and spend another two years running regression analyses to tell you how many lives were saved. They don't have to look at the unseen. So, just simply conceptualizing the unseen without any numbers is far more powerful and far more useful than all of the sophisticated mathematics that you could deploy when you are funded to ignore the unseen.

JD: You bring up Africa. There's this idea in the West that we're simply rich forever, that this material wealth surrounding us will organize itself regardless of what we do—regardless of incentives. We don't have to worry about it. So we can shut down big parts of the supply chain for a year or two and tell people they don't have to work. We can give employers PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) loans to make payroll without producing the goods or services they normally produce. We can tell people they don't have to pay their rent. These things are just costless. I think the average American at this point thinks these actions are costless because government has the money. The federal government has the unlimited power to issue its sovereign currency as needed, this is what MMT (modern monetary theory) argues. And it's trickled down to the politicians. We can just create money forever and ever.

Imagine going to a financial planner in your twenties instead of your thirties or forties. If you saved money younger, at least back when we had interest rates, the cumulative effect of compounding interest made you much better off. So when we give up two years of economic output, what does that mean for the world a few decades from now? What does that mean for capital accumulation and future prosperity? How do we measure that over time? We'll never know, I suppose, but what strikes me is this acceptance by people in the West. The Left loves it because now everyone working those low-wage tough jobs at Subway for eight to ten bucks an hour have newfound bargaining power in the labor-management relationship. Maybe they will never go back to those jobs. The Left loves this idea of a Great Reset, because they think wealth exists perpetually in the West and simply needs to be doled out more equitably. Never mind that billions of people need to get up and produce wealth every day. They think electricity and hot and cold running water, and a Starbucks on every corner, and cars and planes will just materialize without respect to incentives. That is the dangerous mythology behind covid shutdowns: production is assumed.



I don't know what to say to people who don't understand that more money and credit does not equal more goods and services and society.

SA: Yes, I think it's the Left, but it's also the fiat world. This is fiat par excellence. This is the world of people who just think that government can dictate those things. The reason we have all of these things working, the reason you walk into a house that is protected from the elements and that has electricity and has all of these amazing devices is because the government passed a law and said houses should be like that. They don't understand the amount of work that went into it, and for me, the crowning glory of this kind of mental dysfunction is when people tell you, "Well, now what do you bitcoiners suggest to do if we have an economy that was running on bitcoin? How would you shut down the world on a bitcoin economy if you couldn't print money and hand it out to people?" And "Checkmate, bitcoiners." As if the fiat allows you to suspend the rules of economics and now the government just hands out money and then we create prosperity. Uber Eats still shows up outside your door and you still keep getting the food, and your economy will continue to work and hum along seamlessly for the next decade because the government is printing money while you're protected.

Well, in a cruel, hard-money economy, if you had gold or bitcoin and you had those evil Austrian economists in charge, then the government couldn't protect you by printing money and you'd have to go out and actually work in order to produce those things. It's such an insane way of looking at the world, but it really is the fiat viewpoint. It's something I discuss in detail in *The Fiat Standard* because it's exactly what fiat allows people to think, because you look around and the government is constantly able to give things for free, take things for free, make things for free. It's always the case that we can get whatever we want. Do we want to make Afghanistan into a modern democracy? Just print a bunch of money and go to Afghanistan. Do you want to make Iraq into a modern democracy? Same thing. Whatever it is that you want, you can just print money and get it and the only limit, the only restraint is getting the political will to do it. And that's MMT. This is now a school of thought with a growing number of people, particularly young people, because the younger you are, the more you've lived in this clown fiat world where economic reality is dictated from above, rather than a result of work.

It's easy to poke fun at the Left, of course, and I'm always up for poking fun at the Left, but what's really amazing is how many people in finance think like that. How many people who work in fiat finance think like this? One of the most remarkable is Nassim Taleb, who's completely lost his mind on this issue and has absolutely no conception of how an economy works. With this new omicron hysteria, his buddy in the World Economic Forum, Yaneer Bar-Yam, was saying, "Oh, well, new variant means new epidemic. We need all the restrictions reinstated from day one." And Nassim was retweeting him, saying, "Yup, we've learned nothing." He's learned nothing from the last two years. We need to go and implement all of this because in his world, and in the world of a lot of people who work in finance, money is just numbers on your Bloomberg terminal. The economy is just you sitting there and gambling on whether you're going to get a green candle or a red candle, and you make money on that. And of course, in Nassim's case, he doesn't even trade; he simply writes books about trading and pretends to be trading and never shows what he does. It's just a game. It's like a video game. There's no actual resources, there's no capital.

Nobody discusses this issue that you have pointed out, which is the impact on capital accumulation. What's the world going to look like in five years' time when the things that we count on today needed to have been invested in today in order for them to serve us in five years' time? The grids and the airplanes and the transportation and infrastructure, all of those things that we will need five, ten, fifteen years from now needed to have been invested in today, but who's investing in them today? We are shortening the cycle of production and production is becoming more and more instantaneous, and investment is becoming more and more short term because of inflation and because of the disincentives for work and production.

JD: Inflation means hypothetical little old ladies have to go out and chase yield instead of getting paid 5 percent or 7 percent on savings after a lifetime of thrift. I think the search for yield props up tech stocks to an extent. Yes, there are certainly people in finance (including people on the right) who think economies can just be commanded or engineered. Goods and services can be summoned or

legislated into existence. At some point, I don't know what to say to people who don't understand that more money and credit does not equal more goods and services and society. At some point it becomes tedious to repeat that production has to precede consumption.

Covid, much like any other natural disaster, a terrorist event like 9/11, or a war breaking out, should have a deflationary effect. Yet in every crisis fiscal and monetary policy immediately shifts into fighting human nature by creating inflation. In your new book (*The Fiat Standard*) you point out an article from William Hutt called "The Yield from Money Held." What does it mean when people "hoard" money, when they start holding more cash than usual? Because they always do just that in uncertain times. There was tremendous uncertainty in the world during March of 2020. People didn't know if they were going to lose their jobs. People didn't know if millions of people were going to die. People didn't know what covid really was. Under that kind of uncertainty people immediately begin increasing their cash balances, because cash is the best thing to have during times of trouble relative to less liquid wealth like real estate or stocks.

Hoppe wrote an article called "The Yield from Money Held Reconsidered," which is about Hutt's article. Hoppe presents all the socially beneficial things that happen when people hoard money. And a lot of free market economists disagree with this. They think money has to circulate endlessly, we have to worry about velocity. Money needs to move around like a pinball game. Well, no. When people hold more money, it gives them flexibility and options. Maybe they will need to move for a new job or survive without a paycheck for a while. That's why they naturally

spend less and increase cash holdings in a crisis. This increases everybody else's purchasing power by lowering demand and taking some money out of the purchasing economy, at least temporarily. This is deflationary, and beneficial both for the individual and for society. We want to see prices fall when production falls and savings increase. And yet, everything our politicians do, everything our central bankers do, is designed to fight this natural tendency. We need to stimulate, stimulate, stimulate. We need to create demand. Everything's about demand and consumption, and so we need to create more money and credit on the monetary side. On the fiscal side we need to flood people with stimulus—so they can pay their rent or pay their employees or go buy a new car. We all need to get brand-new \$50,000 Ford F-150s. But if you might lose your job due to covid, it may not be smart to go buy that F-150, worse yet if you have to make payments on it. Your every inclination should be to stop spending and hunker down. But our crazy system encouraged spending in 2020, and so auto dealers in the US had their worst and best sales months on record in the same year. That's a clown-world example of what happens when you distort the economy and go against people's natural inclinations during a crisis.

SA: Yes, it's remarkable. People will say, "Well, the government won't be printing money in a hard-money economy." Well, yes. If there is a massive natural disaster or a world war or whatever, yes, a lot of economic destruction will happen. Free markets obviously can't protect you from earthquakes, but they can ameliorate that because people are going to stop spending money on useless stuff and things that they don't need. So, if you were planning on buying a new car this year, you won't do



It applies on a personal level; it applies on a national level. If you're in trouble, you stop spending on frivolous stuff and you save. But the fiat world just flips all of this on its head.

it. You're going to save your money because who knows, maybe you'll lose your job. So what happens is that the price of cars falls. What you want to buy, the only thing that you do want to buy, is money. You want to hold on to your money, so the price of money basically rises, so you don't need the government to print money and hand it to everybody. Everybody's cash balances appreciate in real terms because everybody's holding on to their money. At that point, goods become cheaper, and that's the way in which we ration those goods. Goods become cheaper because there's no new demand for them, the new cars that have been made already will only go to the people that really, really need them. Everybody else is going to save their money and everybody's money is going to appreciate, so they can buy more, and that's how you weather the storm. That's what you do. It applies on a personal level; it applies on a national level. If you're in trouble, you stop spending on frivolous stuff and you save. But the fiat world just flips all of this on its head. It's remarkable.

JD: I think your new book *The Fiat Standard* is an important one. In many ways it elaborates on themes that Guido Hülsmann presents in his book *The Ethics of Money Production*. Monetary debasement leads to cultural debasement. Political control of money, political money, serves political interests. That creates high time preference in society, which affects families, work, even one's own personal integrity and morality. Your book really fleshes that out by going into particular industries like food. It's a fascinating topic, the cultural implications of monetary policy, and not too many people talk about it. We think of monetary policy as a technocratic set of dials and knobs to be fine-tuned to get optimal production from the barnyard animals. We don't think of it in cultural terms.

SA: Yes, it's clearly hitting a nerve for people who can see this clearly. The kind of money that you use in every single trade with the rest of the world and with yourself is going to have an effect. Nobody wants to talk about it among the economists except basically Hülsmann and me and a few other Austrians, which is great because it just means more sales for my books. So, I encourage all other economists to continue to stick to their NGDP targeting

models. That'll surely work out one day when the Fed appoints you and you get to show us how you are actually right with all these equations.

JD: Yes, if we just get the right Federal Reserve chair! This is what Washington, DC, gives us. It gives us this idea we fix things politically. But that's too far gone now. The money's too far gone, the politics are too far gone, the entitlements are too far gone. We're in a car going too fast and there's a sharp curve ahead with a steep cliff beyond. At some point no amount of braking or countersteering can save you from going over the cliff. I think our focus ought to be on building things rather than trying to save things.

SA: It's not even that you can actually be the right person in the Fed. There is no right person in that job. The right person in that job is no person in that job. Recently, you and I were both commenting on the St. Louis Fed taking on the role of Betty Crocker and giving the world dietary advice about how to handle their Thanksgiving. This was amazing because it came exactly in the week in which I published my book. There's a huge chapter on fiat food in the book and how government intervention in the food market has resulted in the degradation of the dietary experience of the average person in the world today and a shift in the Overton window of what is considered food. It's allowed the inclusion of all kinds of industrial waste into our food supply, pushed and promoted by governments because this helps hide inflation.

I've said before, that my North Star in life is the jeering of idiots: when idiots start jeering me, I know I'm on to something important. It happened with coronavirus. It happened with bitcoin. It happened with this discussion of fiat food. When I started talking about this, a lot of people were laughing, "Ah, this is ridiculous. He likes his meat and he's trying to pass off his diet as being something more profound than just him liking steaks." I wrote a whole chapter about it, maybe ten thousand words in *The Fiat Standard*. Then the Federal Reserve chose to give me this amazing gift during the week of its publication. They proclaimed, instead of eating an actual turkey, make your turkey out of soy. You'll get more protein per dollar.

It's Soviet levels of delusion and propaganda. And they believe their own nonsense about it being successful and so there's no limit to how far this is going to go

It's amazing. There was a very astute comment about this, which is the more central planning happens in the monetary realm, the more we will inevitably have the central bank *have* to intervene in all aspects of life.

JD: It's pretty scary to see the new woke language at the Fed and central banks in general. You pointed out earlier that younger economists at central banks may well be brilliant in terms of pure IQ and mental horsepower. They went to Wharton, they went to Harvard, they went to Stanford. But they've never seen a bear market and they've never seen real positive interest rates. They really have no conception of the history of economic thought. So they don't know much about Marx and Keynes and Samuelson, much less the Austrians or Adam Smith or the Spanish Scholastics. It's very dangerous because these young brilliant people think they can engineer outcomes and make humans respond in the ways they want. That's what scares me. Now we add the social justice push to the agenda. The Fed needs to fight sexism, to fight racism, to help us achieve justice in society. They need to help us overcome this amorphous idea of climate change. That's a real shift. That would shock the ghost of Paul Volcker. It's part and parcel of the world we live in now, where everything has been so politicized they're able to make this stuff seem nonpolitical. Fighting climate change is just what all good people do to leave the earth intact for future generations. Well, we already had that. Teddy Roosevelt had that. It was called conservation. We don't need central bankers from Wharton to tell us this. When central banks get overtly political, watch out.

SA: It's amazing because the statistics constantly show that there is no problem of inflation. All right, there's a little bit of transitory inflation, maybe, here and there, and it's because of supply chain issues and the climate crisis and this and that, but it's reached Soviet levels of propaganda now. People are visibly suffering. Prices are massively going up, supply chains are disrupted because nobody's working because everybody's getting paid to sit at home. Economic production is being destroyed, money is being printed and handed out like confetti, and economic production is essentially falling apart. They're

covering it up with their amazing empirical magical statistics. And then, they believe their own bullshit, in the sense that "Well, look, we can manage the pandemic. We've saved the world from the virus, we've printed all this money and we didn't cause inflation, so what else can we fix?" This mentality leads them to say, "Well, let's fix people's diets by feeding them soy and let's fix the climate by stopping the production of cows and replacing cows with soy, because grazing animals are ruining the planet and monocropping is destroying the soil. That's how we take care of the planet." It's Soviet levels of delusion and propaganda. And they believe their own nonsense about it being successful and so there's no limit to how far this is going to go, and I think you're absolutely correct on the climate change.

There's another thing that I keep harping on, and people mock me and laugh at me and tell me, "You're being crazy." But carbon dioxide is an essential component of every living organism on earth. There are no living things that don't contain carbon dioxide, and so if you're able to control carbon dioxide under whatever stupid pretense you come up with, you're able to control all of life. This is an enormous, enormous step forward for central planners around the world. I think it's absolutely mind boggling to imagine that they want to control how much carbon dioxide is being emitted all over the world. It's insane.

To go back to *The Fiat Standard*, I spent part of the book talking about fiat life. I talk about energy and I talk about food, and I discuss how in the 1970s the central bank's monetary policy, which led to inflation, also led to central banks and the governments all over the world trying to promote these alternative sources of nutrition and energy because they were cheaper. They were very happy to support and subsidize and promote all kinds of idiotic pseudoscience that tells you meat is bad for you and you should eat soy because that's how you stay healthy. And that meat is bad for the planet and fossil fuels are bad for the planet and that the future is to eat soy and rely on wind and solar energy. If you do that, there's no inflation because these things are far cheaper to produce, but of course, they're far inferior. If you live off solar and wind,

you live like your ancestors lived five hundred years ago. It definitely keeps the CPI (Consumer Price Index) down but also makes surviving the winter much harder, and it also means no motor transportation, and it also means you're going to have to live in a much tinier house to be able to keep it warm. I think we're witnessing the world heading toward that now.

We're seeing a revival of these 1970s memes. They never really left us because inflation never left us. But now we are seeing it being pushed aggressively. When you add in the prospect of central bank digital currencies, central banks will have complete control over every dollar of spending and social credit scores. We're already seeing this with the vax passport. It is a prelude to total centralization. There's a reason why all of the people who are hysterically afraid of the virus are also hysterically afraid of climate change and also believe that inflation is not a problem.

Inflation is not going to be a problem if you have a social credit score system and a central bank digital currency that limits you to fifty grams of beef a week and three hundred milligrams of gasoline a month or whatever it is. You're going to have rationing Soviet style done through your iPhone, and you're entirely dependent on delivery to your house, and you're not going to be able to afford a big house. Everybody's going to move into these tiny, little bug pods where they're going to stay home all the time with Mark Zuckerberg's headset on their face and experience life through the headset. You're going to eat

the soy, and you're going to live in the pod, and you're going to not move, and you're going to stay cold, and there will be no inflation.

One other thing I want to talk to you about is your *Human Action Podcast*. I listen to that quite a bit and I really enjoy it. You host Austrian economists, and others, to talk about the great books. Make the pitch for people who haven't dug into the nine-hundred-page tomes. Why are those books great and why should people read them?

JD: Well, I thought there were too many podcasts. What could I do different to provide value? So we decided to focus on books and use the show to help explain economic theory while promoting some of the great literature of the Austrian school. Sometimes we get into political science, sometimes we get into philosophy, occasionally even fiction or antiwar history, but for the most part we focus on economic theory. Some people do listen pretty religiously. My pitch is this: if you're not going to read that book, the podcast is the CliffsNotes. It's like watching the movie instead of reading the book. And it might inspire you to actually go out and read it. For long books we have multiple episodes, so we don't rush through things. I hope five or ten years from now the old shows will still have value, which I think is not true of a lot of current events podcasts. I always try to ask myself—What has value and what lasts? These books will still be here years from now, and our explanations or elucidations of them will still be here. ■■■

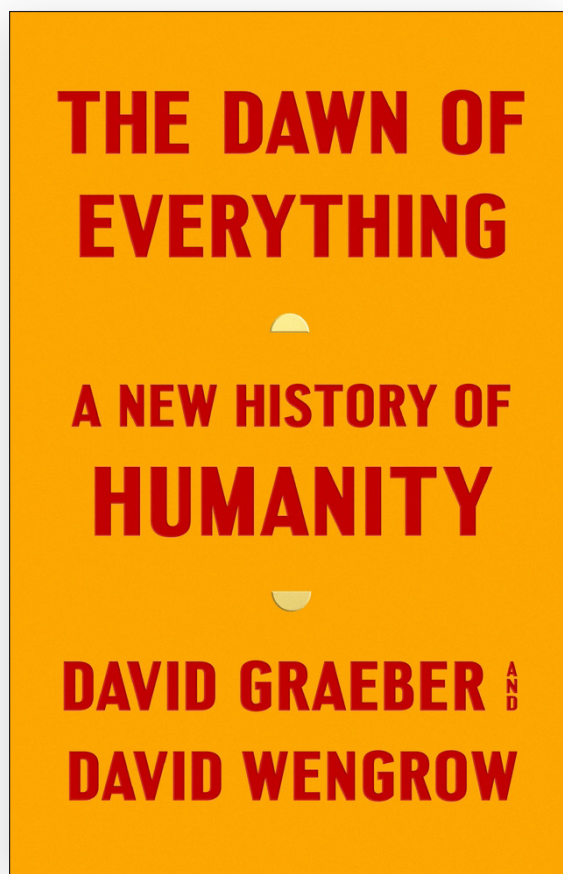


KNOWLEDGE IN THE SERVICE OF A POLITICAL AGENDA IS BIASED

DAVID **GORDON**

REVIEWS

The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity
By David Graeber and David Wengrow
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021
Xii + 692 pages



The *Dawn of Everything*, which has already attracted much scholarly attention and is a best seller as well, should be a warning to all academics: do not write about economics or the history of modern Europe if you are ignorant of these subjects. David Graeber, who died shortly after this book was finished, was an anthropologist, and David Wengrow is an archaeologist. Both have written extensively in their areas of specialty, and, so far as I can determine, they are well regarded by some of their fellow specialists. Much of this overly long book is an often tedious description of various archaeological sites around the world, based on extensive citation of fieldwork, but it nevertheless contains valuable suggestions and merits careful study. Even here, though, one ought to be cautious. It does not encourage confidence when they tell us “Teotihuacan’s growth to urban dimensions began around the year 0.” You might have expected that even children in elementary school would know that there is no year zero in our calendar.

Unfortunately, they put their knowledge in the service of a political agenda for the modern world, which they defend with poor arguments disfigured further by gross errors. They are left anarchists and regard capitalism as an evil, “hierarchical” system that ought to be replaced, though by what we are never clearly told. In their account, contact with Indian tribes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries posed a challenge to European intellectuals. Society, they thought, necessarily rested on hierarchy. The lot of a poor peasant was far worse than that of a nobleman, and this might be regrettable, but a society of near equals in power could not exist. Contact with the Indians suggested, on the contrary, that it could and did

exist, and this led intellectuals to question the legitimacy of hierarchy in their own societies. “Just about every major French Enlightenment figure tried their hand at a ... critique of their own society, from the perspective of some imagined outsider.”

Given this criticism, the defenders of hierarchy tried to strike back. Graeber and Wengrow take the great French economist Anne Robert Jacques Turgot to be among these defenders, and they direct much of the argument in the book against a model he developed. According to them, Turgot believed that societies advance through a series of inevitable stages, from savagery to barbarism to civilization. Equality is suitable only for very small societies, and we cannot go back to it. “Turgot would elaborate these same ideas in a series of lectures on world history. He had already been arguing—for some years—for the primacy of technological progress as a driver for overall social improvement. In these lectures, he developed this argument into an explicit theory of stages of economic development; social evolution, he reasoned, always begins with hunters, then moves on to a stage of

pastoralism, then farming, and only then finally passes to the contemporary stage of urban commercial civilization. Those who still remain hunters, shepherds or simple farmers are best understood as vestiges of our own previous stages of social development. ... In this way, theories of social evolution ... first came to be articulated in Europe: as a direct response to the power of indigenous critique.”¹

The authors give two main arguments against this model. First, the stages aren’t inevitable: rather, societies at the “lower” levels sometimes consciously choose the sort of economic, social, and political system they wish, and their choices often fail to follow the order Turgot set forward. Second, Turgot is wrong to view our own stage of civilization as better than its noncivilized predecessors. I’ll discuss the latter criticism first, as dealing with it is easier.

Graeber and Wengrow say that the higher value ascribed to civilization rests on the false assumption that economic productivity is the highest social good. “By framing the



¹ I discuss other aspects of Graeber and Wengrow’s criticism of Turgot in my article “In Defense of Turgot,” *Mises Wire*, December 10, 2021, <https://mises.org/wire/defense-turgot>.

As Mises points out in *Human Action*: “The immense majority strives after a greater and better supply of food, clothes, homes, and other material amenities. In calling a rise in the masses’ standard of living progress and improvement, economists do not espouse a mean materialism.”

stages of human development largely around the ways people went about acquiring food, men like Adam Smith and Turgot inevitably put work—previously considered a somewhat plebeian concern—centre stage. There was a simple reason for this. It allowed them to claim that their own societies were self-evidently superior, a claim that—at the time—would have been much harder to defend had they used any criterion other than productive labour.”



In putting things this way, they have wrongly framed what is at stake. The issue is not whether one society is “superior” to another judged from some external standpoint. Rather it is that if a society has a very large population, only a market economy will enable most people to survive and prosper. Further, even if Graeber and Wengrow think they shouldn’t, most people nowadays want a high standard of material goods, and it is of little consequence if there have been past societies in which they didn’t. As Ludwig von Mises points out in *Human Action*: “The immense majority strives after a greater and better supply of food, clothes, homes, and other material amenities. In calling a rise in the masses’ standard of living progress and improvement, economists do not espouse a mean materialism. They simply establish the fact that people are motivated by the urge to improve the material conditions of their existence. They judge policies from the point of view of the aims men want to attain. He who disdains the fall in infant mortality and the gradual disappearance of famines and plagues may cast the first stone upon the materialism of the economists. There is but one yardstick for the appraisal of human action; whether or not it is fit to attain the ends aimed at by acting men.”

We can now address the first criticism given of Turgot’s theory of stages, and I hope it will soon become clear why I started with their second criticism. Once you realize that if Graeber and Wengrow wish to end capitalism as it now exists, they need to consider whether present conditions make this possible, you can see that their first point against Turgot is irrelevant to their political concerns. That said, their first point is a good one. Unless their presentation of the archaeological data is a total misreading, they do successfully show that it isn’t fixed that foragers who have been exposed to an agricultural society will forthwith abandon their former ways for the new dispensation. To

the contrary, they often consciously reject agriculture or adopt it only in part. Further, in a process Graeber and Wengrow, following Gregory Bateson, call “schismogenesis,” societies sometimes adopt practices in conscious opposition to neighboring societies. They write: “Schismogenesis ... describes how societies in contact with each other end up joined within a common system of differences, even as they attempt to distinguish themselves from one another.... Each society performs a mirror image of the other. In doing so, it becomes an indispensable alter ego, the necessary and ever-present example of what one should never wish to be.” But if what is at issue is whether a market economy can now be successfully changed to something else, all of this is irrelevant.

Perhaps, though, it is better that Graeber and Wengrow devoted the bulk of their efforts in this book to prehistory, as their forays into the modern leave much to be desired. We learn from them that, “it was only ... in the late nineteenth century, when men like Tom Paine came up with the concept of ‘representative democracy’ that the right to weigh in on spectacular competitions among the political elite came to be seen as the essence of political freedom, rather than its

antithesis.” Paine died in 1809, and the term “representative democracy” was in use in England in the 1790s. Contrary to what they say, Louis XIV was not one of “the ‘absolutist’ monarchs of the Renaissance”; he reigned after it. Nor are their mistakes confined to chronology. In his *On the Demonomania of Witches* (1581), Jean Bodin says that women are fifty times more likely to be witches than men, but it is news to me that “he is further remembered today for his profound hatred of women.” The primary reason that Christian Wolff was expelled from Prussia was not his lectures on Chinese customs, although this was a factor, but Pietist opposition to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz’s philosophy, of which Wolff was considered an exponent. It is also misleading to say that “a warrant was issued for his arrest and he was forced to flee for his life.” He was given two days to leave Prussia, on penalty of hanging, but he did not try to run from an arrest warrant, and King Friedrich Wilhelm I a number of years later tried to get Wolff to return to his university position.

Graeber and Wengrow are right to question stage theories of history, but they pass by in silence the laws of economics that show the necessity of the free market for a complex modern society. ■■■



The Critical Need for Independent Media

WITH GLENN GREENWALD



Glenn Greenwald is an American journalist, author, and constitutional lawyer. He has been a constant voice advocating for a free and independent news media. During the George W. Bush administration he was an outspoken blogger, criticizing the administration's attacks on civil liberties. In 2013, along with Edward Snowden, Greenwald published classified documents about the United States intelligence services and their invasive and clandestine use of global surveillance. This led to a Pulitzer Prize for *The Guardian* and the *Washington Post*, and

a George Polk Award for him in 2013. He is the author of several books, including *How Would a Patriot Act? Defending American Values from a President Run Amok*, *A Tragic Legacy*, and *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State*, all *New York Times* best sellers. Greenwald publishes on Substack, an online news platform.

Glenn Greenwald was a special guest at our December 4, 2021, event in Lake Jackson, Texas, *The Ron Paul Revolution: A Ten-Year Retrospective*. He spoke via zoom from Brazil.

 @ggreenwald

Glenn Greenwald: I spent the moments leading up to this event reflecting on the movement that had been galvanized by Ron Paul and the events and the dynamics that it reflected—not even necessarily created, but shown a light on those that were already there. Obviously the importance of independent media, which is something that I've been asked to speak on, has been central to my entire career. In a lot of ways these two topics, seemingly disparate topics, really do converge, certainly in the work that I've done but also in our political culture in general. There's a lot of talk now about the importance of independent media, primarily because there obviously is an increased level of

aggression and repression on the part of Big Tech social media companies to censor and restrict and control our political discourse. This censorship comes from these big tech monopolies that are more powerful than any in human history. It isn't just because of the wealth that they've amassed but because of the data they collect on us and the ability to buy up most of the brain power of artificial intelligence (which is what Facebook and Google have done) and to start exploiting that in ways that have almost no transparency and that are beyond democratic accountability, and, of course, the ability to control and police our discourse.

What made the internet so exciting, what made the internet so potentially liberatory and revolutionary was that it would empower citizens to communicate with one another and to organize and disseminate information without having to be mediated and controlled by centralized corporate and governmental authority.

In January 2021, they united, these Silicon Valley companies did, to remove the sitting president of the United States from the most influential internet platforms that people use to communicate. That was, I think, the pinnacle of their assertion of power to make clear what has long been obvious but not particularly acknowledged, that in many ways these corporations have become so powerful that they're actually more powerful than a lot of nation-states.

Nation-states and obviously people are starting to question and become very concerned about what it means that so much power is centralized in the hands of a few unaccountable corporations. They are able to dictate what ideas are permissible and which ideas are impermissible and, on some level even more alarmingly, to dictate what is true and what is false, so that "disinformation" becomes prohibited. And by disinformation what they mean is ideas or opinions or dissent or questioning that somebody that they vested their credibility and competence in determines truth. An amazingly hubristic and arrogant power for human beings to believe that they are competent to exercise, that these institutions that have invested in this power can actually now determine what is true. And that not only means that we're told these ideas are false, but these ideas become prohibited from being expressed on the most significant and influential communication platforms on the internet. And to describe that is to demonstrate why it's incredibly alarming.

One of the often-overlooked components of this dynamic is the assumption that the executives of these Silicon Valley companies have become power hungry, that they have seen the potential of the machines that they created, of the technology they developed to constrain political discourse and control what people think, and are power hungry or mad with power and are now trying to use it to censor the internet in accordance with their ideological

preferences. While there is perhaps some truth to that framework, it's a very simplistic assumption and one that is less accurate than people often realize.

If you go and look at how the internet was conceived of when it first emerged as a pervasive technology in our lives in the mid-1990s, it came from a new sector in Silicon Valley that I would describe politically, more than anything else, as being libertarian. Not only libertarian in the classical economic sense, in the sense of the Mises Institute or the Cato Institute or classic libertarian economic theory, but libertarian in its ethos. What made the internet so exciting, what made the internet so potentially liberatory and revolutionary, was that it would empower citizens to communicate with one another and to organize and disseminate information without having to be mediated and controlled by centralized corporate and governmental authority. That was the vision, the triumphant vision that Silicon Valley pioneers who created these companies almost unanimously embraced. They never in a million years set out to try and create a regime of censorship.

Sometimes people say that I'm romanticizing or downplaying the corrupt nature of Silicon Valley executives, that perhaps they didn't begin with that intention but power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely and they became corrupted. But the reality is even if you talk to them now you can hear this in some of their public pronouncements. Mark Zuckerberg and the executives, the founders and current management of Google, obviously Jack Dorsey, had been resistant to this idea that they ought to be deciding what is truth and falsity, they ought to be exercising, assuming this role to police our discourse. I remember there was a controversial interview with Mark Zuckerberg that Kara Swisher conducted for the *New York Times*. She's a journalist who's been around

But to many people in media, especially journalists, their real criticism is not that they're censoring too much but that they're not censoring enough.

Silicon Valley for a long time. She was pressing him on what she regarded—and what a lot of people regarded—as the failures of these companies to censor enough. The amazing thing is that for a lot of us, we view the danger, the grave danger, that these corporations that are unaccountable are exercising so much power and censoring more and more. But to many people in media, especially journalists (that's the most bizarre part), their real criticism is not that they're censoring too much but that they're not censoring enough. And it's not just the media that believes that. The Democratic Party all but explicitly says that.

In fact there's now been four times, four times, in the last twelve months when the Democrats, who control both houses of Congress, have summoned before them the executives of the three leading social media companies, Facebook, Google, and Twitter. And each time they do, they become increasingly explicit about their demands that they want these companies to censor, not more scrupulously or meticulously or with greater caution, but with quite the opposite. They want them to censor with much greater aggression and more indiscriminately. They are now explicitly threatening these companies, that if they do not censor more in accordance with the Democratic Party worldview and what the Democratic Party politicians regard as disinformation, or harmful opinions, what we call hate speech, they will begin to punish them by using their majoritarian control over both houses of Congress and the executive branch by imposing legal and regulatory retaliation.

So when Kara Swisher interviewed Mark Zuckerberg, I believe it was in 2017 (at the start of this idea that Silicon Valley was at fault for not censoring enough), the Democrats blamed Facebook and Twitter and virtually everybody else in the world for Hillary Clinton's defeat. They blamed everybody in the world except Hillary Clinton herself for the fact she lost to what basically was a game show host, and a very unpopular one at that. Instead of

engaging in self-critique or asking why they and their neoliberal ideology are so repulsive to so many people, they instead look for someone to blame. They said, "Oh, Putin's to blame, James Comey is to blame, Joel Stein is to blame, WikiLeaks is to blame." But they also heaped a lot of blame on Silicon Valley and said, "You allowed too many people to be heard." You allowed what we regard as too much misinformation, meaning criticisms of the Democratic Party.

In 2017, when the Swisher-Zuckerberg interview took place, the climate was very much anger at Facebook for not censoring enough. Swisher challenged Zuckerberg on that. He said, "Look, I went to Harvard and then I created Facebook. How am I competent to dictate what is true and what is false about complex political, scientific, and sociological and cultural debates? Why would anyone want me engaging in that kind of an incredibly powerful role? Who arrogated that power unto me to do that?" And she said, "So, even when it comes to, for example, history, you aren't capable of saying, look, this person is engaged in Holocaust revisionism, therefore that's obviously disinformation and therefore should be removed from your platform?" And he said, "No, actually I don't think I'm competent to assess claims about history. Obviously I have an opinion about them. I think Holocaust denialism or revisionism is grotesque. I'm a Jew," he said. "My family perished in the Holocaust. So it's not like I don't have opinions, but I don't believe I should be playing that role." And it was incredibly controversial, the fact that he said that.

If you talk to people who know Silicon Valley executives or if you talk to them themselves, a much more complex and I think more disturbing vision arises about why there is so much censorship, not necessarily because these tech executives want to be censoring. Even if you don't believe what I argued, which is that their ethos and their impulse is more libertarian—they believe in a free internet, not one that's controlled—even if you think that's naïve of me, if

you're someone who runs Facebook or owns Google or runs Twitter and founded Twitter, you don't want to be in the business of arbitrating political disputes and kicking people off your platform. It's a thankless task. You never make anyone happy that way.

Whenever you censor someone, you're making someone happy but someone else angry. And if you're a big corporation, all big corporations want to avoid angering people. They want everybody to be welcome to use their service. But also they don't want to be kicking people off their platform, they want to be growing the number of people who are their users. A big part of why we now live under a regime of such crushing censorship when it comes to what was supposed to be this emancipatory technology, which is the internet, is not necessarily because these tech giants wanted to censor, but because this obligation was foisted upon them by a mixture of corporate journalists who use shame and coercive tactics to pressure these companies to censor more.

What happens is that somebody engages in a terrorist act or engages in political violence and then someone immediately says, "Mark Zuckerberg has blood on his hands because he allowed this extremism to take root on his platform." Or Jack Dorsey does, or Google does. Billionaires, despite being billionaires, are also human beings who live in our society. They don't want to have that kind of shame attached to them. They feel that. When the *New York Times* and CNN and NBC News use their gigantic megaphones to disparage and destroy the reputations of these corporate executives on the grounds that they're not censoring enough, that shame is a strongly felt emotion.

We're human beings, we're all tribal. As recently as five thousand years ago, cast out of our tribe, it meant that we wouldn't survive. We would die. So belonging to society is an important impulse, instinctively, that we have. And that's why shame is such a powerful tool. It's amazing that it is journalists, or more accurately employees of media corporations who have really taken the lead in pressuring these companies to undertake this role. (Their job title is journalist. I think what they really are, are employees of media corporations. If you think of them that way, it all makes more sense). And the Democratic Party has used its power, has abused its political power, in order to force these companies to censor in accordance with their ideology.

Let me give you an example that illustrates this really well. Whenever I and others would argue that Facebook and Google and Amazon and Apple had become classic monopolies in violation of the antitrust laws, that their powers were too great to allow a free market to thrive, that no competition was possible, the answer was, to those of us saying that, "That's not true. If you want to go and create your own social media platform that allows more permissive free speech than Facebook and Google and Twitter, you can just go and create your own social media company."

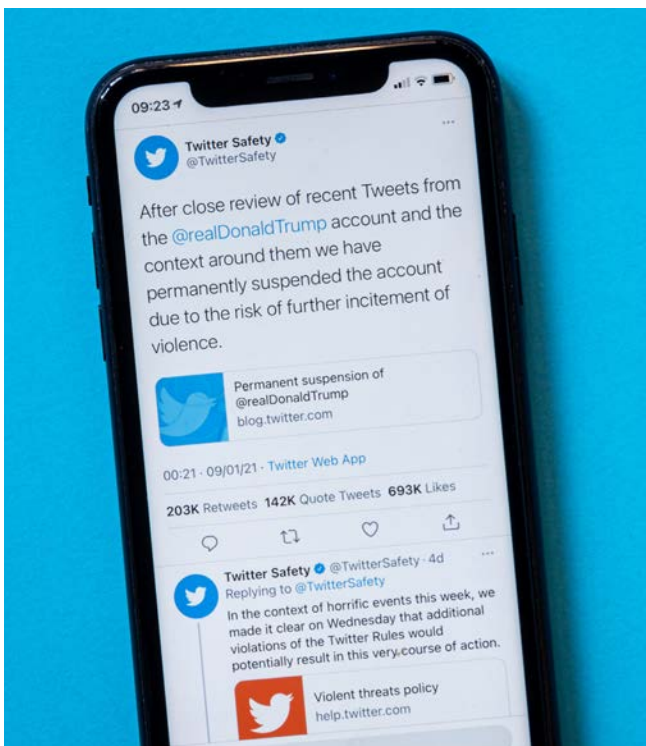
There were people who heard that argument of If you don't like what is being done on these platforms, go create your own. And they did. They said, "You know what? That's true. We should go do that." And they were not people, despite the media narrative, who were Trump supporters. They were more libertarian, people who had actually worked in the Ron Paul movement with Rand Paul, mostly libertarians who said, "You know what? Let's go create our own company instead of whining to the government or whining to the media about how we don't like what these private companies are doing and we'll prove there's



Suddenly I had my own blog and I had a blank screen every day and I could fill it up with whatever I wanted. I had no editor. I had no corporations, no advertisers telling me what I could and couldn't say.

a market for a platform that doesn't censor." They called that competitor Parler.

In January of 2021, after the January 6 riot, after the censorship in the weeks leading up to the 2020 election¹ people saw that Silicon Valley was uniting to ban the sitting president of the United States. The president, the person who was elected by the American people through the constitutional electoral process, banned from the internet for all intents and purposes. Because he was banned, most people went to Parler.



There was anger about the fact there was no longer a free internet. People were migrating to Parler in droves to the point where it became the single most popular, number one downloaded platform on multiapp and Google stores. More popular than Facebook and TikTok and Instagram and Twitter. And when that happened it really scared parts of the liberal Left. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez went on Twitter to her 12.5 million Twitter followers and she said, "Apple and Google, how is it possible that you can allow this app to continue to be downloaded through your stores when so much of the extremism that led to January 6 is percolating on this platform?" Now, what she said was a lie. As it turned out, there was a lot more planning of January 6 on platforms like Facebook and YouTube than there was on Parler. But that was her argument. She said, "They're responsible for January 6 and by allowing them to be downloaded on your stores, you basically have blood on your hands." The other Democrats who are prominent on social media like Ro Khanna made the same argument. And within twenty-four hours, twenty-four hours, Apple and Google used their monopoly power to kick Parler off of their stores, so it became impossible to download Parler from the Apple Store or Google Play store. If you had an Android or an iPhone, there was no longer any way to download Parler. And if you had already downloaded Parler there'd be no way to get the updates that you need for it to continue being functional.

Once Google and Apple obeyed the demands of AOC and other Democrats to use their monopoly power to destroy Parler by preventing them from being downloaded any further, AOC went back onto Twitter and said, "Okay, congratulations, Google and Apple, for having done the right thing. But Amazon, what about you? You're hosting Parler on your web services, which is a dominant company

¹ Twitter and Facebook banned any discussion of reporting of the *New York Post* that reflected poorly on Joe Biden based on a lie concocted by the CIA that those emails from Hunter Biden's laptop were Russian disinformation. Twitter banned any posting of the link, and Facebook algorithmically suppressed the spread of the story despite what was obvious at the time and what has since been proven, which is those emails were totally authentic.

that hosts 80 percent of websites. Why are you allowing Parler to operate on the web?” Within twenty-four hours after that Amazon announced they had removed Parler and canceled their contract. So within forty-eight hours, at the behest of Democratic Party leaders, the combination of Apple, Google, and Amazon, which the Democratic Party itself says are classic monopolies and abusing antitrust laws, had essentially completely destroyed Parler, the free speech alternative to Twitter, to Facebook, and to Google. So this idea that “Oh, don’t worry, there’s a marketplace where you can go and compete with these companies, where you can go and create a more positive free speech platform if you don’t like it,” is a myth. Almost unanimously, the Democratic Party and its allies in the media applauded the destruction of Parler by the Silicon Valley monopolies. Very few of us were actually denouncing it. So for me the question of independent media is something I’ve always regarded as crucial. And that probably goes back to the way I began my writing career.

Some of you might know, it’s a long time ago now, feels like ten lifetimes ago, but in 2005 I was not a journalist. I had no public platform to talk about politics. I was a constitutional lawyer working in New York. And by early 2005, I had moved to Brazil because I had met my Brazilian husband and had to make a career change. I couldn’t keep being a lawyer if I was living in Brazil. So in late 2005, I created my own blog. At the time there was a free blog creation software from Google called Blogspot. And I went and hit Create Blog. It was literally that easy. Suddenly I

had my own blog and I had a blank screen every day and I could fill it up with whatever I wanted. I had no editor. I had no corporations, no advertisers telling me what I could and couldn’t say. I was saying whatever I wanted to say.

My motive in 2005 was that I believed, and obviously still do, that civil liberties were under grave assault by the very radical theories of executive power that had been implemented in the name of the war on terror by the Bush-Cheney administration. They were secretly spying on Americans, not just foreign nationals but Americans, without the warrants required by law; asserting the power to ignore Congress; obviously engaging in new wars without congressional approval; trampling over the Constitution and basic rights. I did not believe there was anywhere near sufficient attention being paid to this because the corporate media was largely on their side.

By creating a blog to focus on these issues and using my expertise as a constitutional lawyer to do it, I developed a large audience quickly, in part because liberals and Democrats—and they love to forget that this was the case—were the main supporters of my work. I was harshly criticizing George Bush and Dick Cheney and they were pretending at the time to care about civil liberties.

Early on a large component of my audience and readership were libertarians because some of the leading and most vocal and most insightful voices against the war on terror, against the war in Iraq, were really not on the left but



were people like Ron Paul and Pat Buchanan and the Cato Institute. And within six months of my creating a blog I had written a book. I was asked to write a book on the civil liberties abuses, and the first place I went to present my book was the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union). And the second place I went was the Cato Institute.

This audience was focused on the abuses of civil liberties by the war on terror and the media was petrified of questioning them. This audience was ideologically diverse and mixed—it really wasn't left or right, it was a huge group of people who had come together on a common concern for civil liberties. This was possible only because independent media had finally begun to have the technology, the tools, to reach large audiences without having to go work for the *New York Times* or NBC News, where you could never have done what I was doing.

So independent media has been central to my work since the time that I began working as a journalist. A formative episode in my career was the fact that so many liberals and Democrats had come to love my work because they saw it as a criticism of George Bush and Dick Cheney, a cudgel that could be used against them. As the popularity of my writing increased I got invited to work at *Salon*, which was

a less liberal online magazine, one of the first; it was a pioneer of internet journalism because of the popularity of my blog.

When Barack Obama campaigned on the grounds that he was going to reverse these civil liberty assaults, reverse the abuses of the war on terrorists, in spite of the fact that he was a constitutional lawyer and because I was still kind of naïve—I was only two or three years into writing about politics—I actually took him seriously. I thought he meant that.

I know it sounds preposterous with hindsight, but at the time Obama was very convincing. He's a very good politician. A lot of liberals were applauding him with passion because they had convinced themselves that he cared so much about civil liberties. He won the 2008 election and in early 2009 he sends his lawyers to court under Attorney General Eric Holder to argue in favor of the very Bush-Cheney war on terror policies that he had spent the campaign vowing to uproot. He eventually began expanding that scope to the point where he even claimed the power to target American citizens for assassination by drone without even bothering to have to go to a court to charge the person with a crime, let



alone present evidence of their guilt, as the Constitution requires. It became obvious to me he was at least as great of a menace to civil liberties as George Bush and Dick Cheney were. And in many ways worse because he had cultivated this image that he was somehow so sensitive to civil liberties, this softer, more cerebral president who had this constitutional lawyer pedigree. He was a lot more dangerous to the civil liberties cause than Bush and Cheney were able to be because of how blunt they were in their attack on it.

My ability to continue to harshly criticize President Barack Obama and maintain my audience and to find another one essentially was only possible because of independent media. Because I wasn't being forced into the left-wing or the right-wing camp, I was able to start asking liberals who claimed for many years to care so deeply about antiwar issues and civil liberties issues why it was they were so devoted to the Democratic Party. The party that was starting new wars in Libya and elsewhere, was running roughshod over civil liberties under Obama, when you had a presidential candidate in Ron Paul. He held many positions antithetical to the Democrats and to the Left, but there were many common areas, including being vocal opponents of the war on drugs and the punitive criminal justice system that it engendered, and speaking forcefully against war and against civil liberties abuses, and defense of privacy rights and basic constitutional guarantees. I was able to ask freely why is it that he's not more appealing to people on the left given what it is they pretend to believe in. And so independent media was crucial to my whole trajectory.

I think that given what Silicon Valley is now doing, independent media has never been more important. Ever since I left the media outlet that I created, which ironically tried to censor me for the first time in the weeks leading up to the 2020 presidential election when I wanted to report on Joe Biden and Hunter Biden's emails and what it reflected about Joe Biden and China and Ukraine, I've been able to be much freer than ever before in my journalism.

What you're seeing now is the emergence of an independent ecosystem in the media. You see it with the immense popularity of people like Joe Rogan, who's captive to nobody and who doesn't have any corporate backing and yet has five, six, seven, ten times the audience of even prime-time cable shows with all of their corporate backing. You see it with the emergence of platforms like Substack and Rumble, which is a free speech competitor to YouTube, and now a new podcast app that I've been

The person I know in my life who is the most at peace with who they are and the most content with what they've done with their lives, despite all the threats, despite the limitations, is Edward Snowden.

working with called Callin. I think you're going to start to see an even further migration, a disappearance of the audience that had paid attention to and trusted corporate media as they slowly realize that neither large, Big Tech platforms nor corporate media can provide a reliable way for citizens to communicate with one another or disseminate information. Only truly independent platforms that vow when there's an idea you dislike or disagree with not to delete it or censor it, but to engage it in reasoned discourse, I think those are the only platforms that are going to restore faith and credibility in journalism and in political discourse in general.

Actually, I am very optimistic. I think the attack of corporate media and the Democratic Party have gone so far, have become so drunk with power, so inebriated with the right of their cause, especially once they began fighting Donald Trump and had convinced themselves they were defending democracy against the fascist takeover. Once you start believing that your cause is that noble and weighty historically, anything becomes justifiable. They've become so extreme that they're generating a backlash that has been very helpful in fueling the rise of independent media. For me that has become my overarching cause—to work with and promote and fortify and use my platform to strengthen those platforms that are truly devoted to independent media, because therein lies our salvation: the ability to engage in free inquiry and free discourse. Without that we're just serfs being propagandized without any means of combating it. That covers a lot. I think all these issues are integrated in my work but also in the political culture generally. So let me thank you once again for inviting me here.

For me that has become my overarching cause—to work with and promote and fortify and use my platform to strengthen those platforms that are truly devoted to independent media, because therein lies our salvation: the ability to engage in free inquiry and free discourse.

Selections from the Q&A Period

Question: Glenn, I just want to thank you for your courage. You and I probably are completely opposite in our worldview and yet we are completely united in our willingness to speak freely. I want to thank you personally for that. My first interaction with you many years ago was with Edward Snowden and I'm curious, on a personal note, how you landed that. How did that go? Are you still in touch with Snowden?

GG: Edward Snowden came to me once he decided that he had discovered something that he in good conscience could not allow to remain hidden, which is that the NSA (National Security Agency) had, unbeknownst to everybody, converted the internet into the most extreme tool of social coercion and political surveillance ever known to humanity. The reason he came to me with that archive, that he wanted to work with me, was because he had been a reader of mine over the course of several years. And he had, I think it's well known, donated money to Ron Paul's campaign. He had, at the time, a libertarian ethos. He's talked about it before, how he also thought that Barack Obama was going to reverse a lot of the abuses and was so disappointed when he didn't.

So the reason he came to me, a lot of people assume, is because I shared his antipathy to mass surveillance. But the reality was more because I was a critic of excessive journalistic deference or subservience to the security state. He was worried he was going to unravel his life to present this archive to a paper like the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and they would publish one or two documents, collect their Pulitzers, and be intimidated or persuaded by the government not to publish the rest. He knew that wouldn't be my case. So he contacted me in late 2012, anonymously. It took a few months to create a climate of trust. By the time he was ready to meet, he was already in Hong Kong, which is a place he had chosen

because he felt it was safe for us to meet where the United States couldn't get a hold of us while we were working together, and the rest, journalistically, is history.

We were able to do the reporting freely. We got threatened by the government for a year with prison. But it won a Pulitzer and a Polk, and a film was made about our work that won an Oscar. The government's hands were tied to really persecute us. Snowden, unfortunately, did get charged with multiple felonies. He sought asylum in Russia, a place he never wanted to be. The US government kind of forced him to remain there when he was trying to leave to get to Latin America, where he intended to seek refuge. He's been there for the last eight years. It's a disgrace that our government forces him to stay in Russia because the second he steps foot outside of it they will nab him and put him in prison for the rest of his life.

On the other hand, he was able to marry his longtime girlfriend who he had at the time, who he met in the United States, Lindsay Mills. They now have a baby. He lives in Moscow. He's able to do interviews and speeches. He wrote a book. He's able to participate in the debate that he helped galvanize. We talk all the time. We're good friends to this very day. We cofounded a group to defend press freedom called Freedom of the Press Foundation.

It's not great that he's trapped in Russia and can't leave. But compared to what we thought was going to be his almost certain outcome, which was being apprehended by the United States government and put in a maximum-security cage for the next fifty years or the rest of his life on national security crimes, what he's been able to do with his life is infinitely better than what we ever imagined that outcome would be. I always say when people ask, "The person I know in my life who is the most at peace with who they are and the most content with what they've done with their lives, despite all the threats, despite the limitations, is Edward Snowden, because he gets to put his

head down on his pillow every night knowing that when faced with the choice of being brave and sacrificing his own liberty and his own life for the public good or being a coward and going along with the crowd, he chose the former option.” I think there’s no substitute for having a clean conscience when it comes to being happy in life.

Question: Glenn, what has happened to the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF)? They used to be a very sincere friend of free speech.

GG: What has happened to them is the same thing that has happened to so many groups, which is, on the one hand, there is a huge sector of American political life that got caught up in this insane media that Donald Trump was this unprecedented threat to all things decent. The conspiracy that consumed the American media and our political life for four years was something that’s going to take years to realize how insane it was, the idea that the Kremlin had infiltrated American institutions and basically controlled the government through clandestine blackmail power over Donald Trump. They kept feeding on this mania with each other that he was the new Hitler, that he had

sold the United States out to Russia, that they basically relinquished all of their previously held principles. I don’t mean just the EFF, but I mean a lot of these institutions I once respected in general, including the ACLU, because this groupthink led them to believe they could no longer afford principles. They were involved in a war on the front line to protect everything decent. And that meant you couldn’t afford principles. It was just a war of power.

The other problem with the EFF is that they always have been very close to Silicon Valley, funded by Silicon Valley. So as Silicon Valley became more aligned with the Democratic Party and liberal politics and started censoring more, EFF lost its ability to be an independent force, to be a bulwark against the kind of censorship they once would’ve condemned. When we created the Freedom of the Press Foundation, that I just alluded to, with Edward Snowden, one of the founders was John Perry Barlow, who was crucial to the founding of EFF and was an outspoken proponent his whole life for a free internet, a free and open internet. And to watch EFF fall into this same groupthink as so many other groups is sad. But I think that’s what explains it. ■■■





UPCOMING EVENTS

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 19

*Mises Meetup
Tampa, FL*

MARCH 18–19

*Austrian Economics Research
Conference 2022, Auburn, AL*

APRIL 2

*Mises Meetup
Birmingham, AL*

MAY 14

*Mises Meetup
Orlando, FL*

MAY 20–21

*6th Austrian Economics Meeting
Europe to be held in Vilnius,
Lithuania***

JUNE 5–10

*Rothbard Graduate Seminar 2022
Auburn, AL*

JULY 24–30

*Mises University 2022
Auburn, AL*

SEPTEMBER 15–16

*Libertarian Scholars
Conference 2022*

OCTOBER 28–30

*Mises Institute 40th
Anniversary*

**The Austrian Economics Meeting Europe (AEME) was founded by the European alumni of Mises University 2014. They held their first conference in 2015.

Student scholarships available for all events. See mises.org/events for details.

23,000 COMPANIES MATCH GIFTS ... DOES YOURS?

Many employers sponsor matching gift programs and will match any charitable contributions made by their employees. To find out if your company has a matching gift policy, please visit matchinggifts.com/mises or check with your HR department to find out if your gift to the Mises Institute can be matched.

Let your company double or triple your impact!



Jeff Deist on TV and Radio

Mises Institute president Jeff Deist is now on TV and radio!

Every Monday from Noon–1 PM EST Jeff appears on News Talk 93.1 in Montgomery, Alabama. Host Joey Clark is a big fan of the Mises Institute and enjoys discussing monetary policy and political economy with Jeff—especially when a US Senate candidate or two are in the studio with them!

You can listen live online via newstalk931.com.

Jeff also hosts the Monday afternoon drive show from 4–6 PM EST on WHBO 1040 AM talk radio in Tampa, Florida.

He brings his unique brand of antipolitics to rapidly growing central Florida, with great guests from the

Mises Institute orbit including Ron Paul, Paul Gottfried, Judge Andrew Napolitano, Tom Woods, Robert Murphy, Per Bylund, and many more. From Biden to covid to inflation, Jeff's show is unique and brings the insights of Austrian economics to a whole new audience.

You can hear the show live via tunein.com/radio/1040-WHBO-s23684/.

Jeff is now a regular guest on the Fox Business channel show *Kennedy*, which airs weeknights from 7–8 PM EST.



News Talk 93.1 FM
Montgomery, AL
Mondays Noon–1 PM EST

WHBO 1040 AM
Tampa, FL
Mondays 4–6 PM EST

Kennedy
Fox Business channel
Weeknights 7–8 PM EST

Liberty vs. Power

with Tho Bishop and Patrick Newman



There is a culture war aspect to economic history. Good history and good economics fundamentally play the role of illustrating for your average person the question “Who is ripping you off?”

—Tho Bishop



Tho Bishop



Patrick Newman

Liberty vs. Power is a history podcast dedicated to what Murray Rothbard saw as the noble task of libertarians, “to de-bamboozle: to penetrate the fog of lies and deception of the State and its Court Intellectuals.” Featuring Mises Fellow Patrick Newman and *Mises Wire* associate editor Tho Bishop, each season is dedicated to exposing the cronyism that has fueled the growth of the American empire and celebrating those precious victories in defense of liberty. This inaugural season focuses on the corruption of early

America, exploring how colonies meant to serve the powers of old Europe gave way to a nation conceived in liberty, and how the ideals of its revolution became co-opted by forces seeking to establish their own empire. From Robert Morris’s First Bank of North America to the corrupt bargain of 1824, the prophecies of the Anti-Federalists to the triumphs of the Jacksonians, season 1 is the perfect complement to works like Murray Rothbard’s *Conceived in Liberty* series, Thomas DiLorenzo’s *Hamilton’s Curse*, and Patrick Newman’s *Cronyism: Liberty versus Power in Early America, 1607–1849*.

Available now on YouTube, mises.org/lvp, and all major podcast platforms.

The Ron Paul Revolution

A Ten-Year Retrospective

Lake Jackson, TX | Mises Meetup



There is a line in Garet Garrett’s essay “The Revolution Was,” “You do not defend a world that is already lost.”

When we think about Ron Paul in 2008 and 2012, and when we think about our own situation today, we are not talking about going back to something. We are talking about building something new.

— Jeff Deist



This December the Mises Institute returned to Lake Jackson, Texas, for a tenth-anniversary retrospective of the Ron Paul Revolution. As Jeff Deist noted in his introductory remarks, there are important lessons to be learned from the past decade as the world struggles to unshackle itself from the covid tyranny of the past two years. Speakers included Tom Woods, Daniel McAdams of *The Ron Paul Liberty Report*, and Lydia Mashburn, who served as policy director for Dr. Paul on the Financial Services Committee.



Our event, sponsored by Steve and Cassandra Torello, also featured the first Mises Institute appearance by Glenn Greenwald, who offered his reflections on “the movement galvanized by Ron Paul.” One point of importance is the powerful defense independent media provided against the agenda of the corporate press, which repeatedly acted to censor and obscure Ron’s message of liberty. It was the rise of noncontrolled outlets—such as social media, the Mises Institute, and LewRockwell.com—that was vital to the spread of the ideas that animated Dr. Paul and his campaigns.

The event concluded with remarks from Ron Paul himself, as well as a special live recording of *The Ron Paul Liberty Report* featuring Ron, Daniel McAdams, and Lew Rockwell.

Special thanks to our generous sponsors Steve and Cassandra Torello for making this event possible.

Talks available at mises.org/Paul21



Congratulations are in order for the **Mises Institute's Newest Senior Fellows!**



Dr. Per Bylund

Dr. Per Bylund is professor of entrepreneurship in the Spears School of Business at Oklahoma State University, and is widely known as an expert on business firms and management. He writes prodigiously, both in academic journals and for lay readers at *Entrepreneur* magazine and mises.org. He has written two books, *The Seen, the Unseen, and the Unrealized: How Regulations Affect Our Everyday Lives* and *The Problem of Production: A New Theory of the Firm*. He also will publish a highly anticipated primer on Austrian economics later this year.

Per is particularly adept at condensing economic theory into a few powerful sentences on Twitter (@PerBylund!) Per was a Mises Research Fellow in 2009, 2010, and 2012 and we are thrilled to have watched his career blossom!

Dr. Bylund and his wife, Susanne, a private equity founder, live in Stillwater, Oklahoma.



Dr. Alex J. Pollock

Dr. Alex J. Pollock, who had a lengthy career in banking, finance, and public policy. Dr. Pollock is a Distinguished Senior Fellow Emeritus of the R Street Institute and was a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute from 2004–15.

He was the principal deputy director of the Office of Financial Research in the US Treasury from 2019 to 2021; president and chief executive officer of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago from 1991 to 2004. He previously served as a director of CME Group and of Ascendium Education Group and continues as a director of the Great Books Foundation, where he was chairman of the board from 2006 to 2014.

Dr. Pollock is also the author of several books, including *Finance and Philosophy—Why We're Always Surprised* (2018) and *Boom and Bust: Financial Cycles and Human Prosperity* (2011), as well as numerous articles and congressional testimony.

Dr. Pollock is a graduate of Williams College, the University of Chicago, and Princeton University.

He and his wife, Anne, live in Lake Forest, Illinois.

the Austrian

A PUBLICATION OF
THE MISES INSTITUTE

The Mises Institute
518 West Magnolia Avenue
Auburn, AL 36832-4501

I want to help the Mises Institute in 2022.

Promoting Austrian economics, freedom, and peace for 40 years. **DONATE ONLINE AT MISES.ORG/DONATE**

My tax-deductible gift is enclosed \$25 **\$60 MEMBERSHIP** \$100 \$250 \$500 Other \$ _____

Payment Method Check/Money Order Credit Card



Card # _____ Exp. _____ Security Code _____

(3-digit number on back or 4-digit number on front of AMEX)

Day Phone _____ Email _____
(phone number required for all credit card transactions)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Country _____

MAIL ANY ADDRESS CORRECTIONS TO:

The Mises Institute
518 West Magnolia Avenue
Auburn, AL 36832-4501 USA

For more information, contact Kristy Holmes,
kristy@mises.org, 800.636.4737

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP LEVELS AND BENEFITS

MEMBER

\$60 or more donation

- Receives *The Austrian* magazine
- Membership card
- 10% discount in Mises Bookstore
- Invitation to Mises events, with discounted registration fees
- Special book signing invites
- Free access to Virtual Mises University

SUSTAINING MEMBER

Recurring donations

Receives all the aforementioned benefits

PREMIUM MEMBERSHIP

\$150 or more donation

Receives all the aforementioned benefits, plus:

- Free access to exclusive online content
- 15% discount in the Mises Bookstore

SUPPORTER

\$500 or more donation

Receives all the aforementioned benefits, plus:

- Monthly updates from Lew Rockwell
- Quarterly Impact Report
- 20% discount in the Mises Bookstore

BRONZE CLUB

\$1,000 or more donation

Receives all the aforementioned benefits, plus:

- Invite to private VIP receptions
- Complimentary Mises publications

SILVER CLUB

\$5,000 or more donation

Receives all the aforementioned benefits, plus:

- Reserved VIP seating at events

GOLD CLUB

\$10,000 or more donation

Receives all the aforementioned benefits, plus:

- Your name is displayed at the Mises Institute
- Invitation to Chairman's Gold Club and Society Annual Meeting